

Joining seniors from the Senior Suites of Joliet on Tuesday, Rep. Debbie Halvorson renewed her promise to defend Social Security and Medicare from any privatization efforts, answered questions about both programs and discussed how her office can help seniors handle issues with both programs.

"Social Security and Medicare are programs that have sustained our middle class and granted a more secure retirement to millions of Americans," said Halvorson. "We must protect the guarantees both of these programs provide-a more secure and healthier retirement."

Halvorson's tour comes after recent ideas were put forward in Washington to privatize Social Security benefits and significantly change Medicare to a private voucher program. Halvorson also stressed her office's availability to constituents to help them solve problems regarding both programs, including late payments or cutting through bureaucratic red tape.

"I want to make sure my constituents have up to date information about the benefits to which they're entitled and paid into their entire lives," said Halvorson. "My office is always available to help constituents deal with federal programs and agencies-this is one of the most importance services I can provide."

One question on the mind of many seniors at the meeting was how the Federal government was helping fixed-income seniors through the economic recession. Halvorson noted the one-time \$250 payment to Social Security beneficiaries included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the stimulus bill.

May Shelby, a participant in the discussion, said afterwards, "It was a very helpful presentation. The update on Social Security and Medicare was very informative."

Halvorson was joined by Max Richtman, Executive Vice President of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. Richtman discussed both programs' significance and future.

"Social Security and Medicare have been critical for the millions of Americans who have paid into these programs throughout their lives. With the idea of privatization not only for Social Security but also Medicare resurfacing in Washington, it's more important than ever to

emphasize these programs have successfully provided for more secure retirements for many generations, and must be preserved and protected for today's seniors as well as future generations," Richtman said.

Halvorson also held similar listening sessions with seniors groups in Normal, Princeton, and Kankakee throughout the week.

Constituents seeking assistance with issues regarding Social Security, Medicare, or any federal government agency can call Halvorson's Joliet district office at 815.726.4998.